

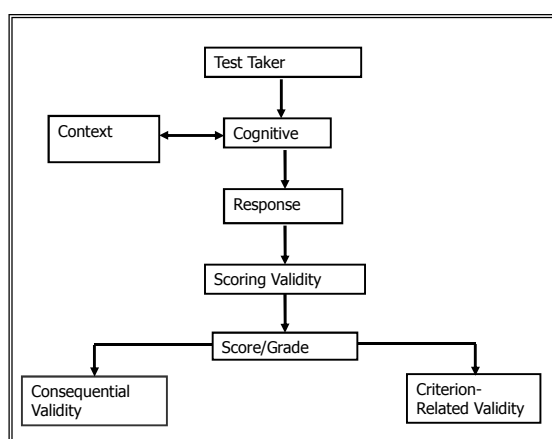
Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment

Assessing Reading-into-Writing Skills for an Academic Context: Some theoretical and practical considerations

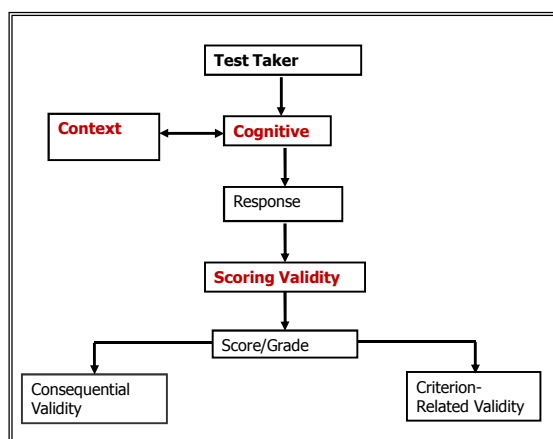
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A socio-cognitive framework for test design



A socio-cognitive framework for test design



**ADDRESSING COGNITIVE VALIDITY
FACTORS IN READING-INTO-WRITING
TASKS**

Cognitive processing levels in reading

- Decoding
- Lexical access
- Syntactic parsing
- Establishing propositional meaning at clause, phrase and sentence level
- Building a meaning representation across paragraphs and whole text
- Integrating information from multiple sources into a coherent mental representation

Global and local reading

- **Global comprehension** refers to the understanding of information beyond the sentence including main ideas, the links between ideas in the text and the way in which these are elaborated.
- **Local comprehension** involves the understanding of propositions within the sentence (individual phrases and clauses). This involves decoding (word recognition, lexical access and syntactic parsing) and establishing explicit propositional meaning at the phrase, clause and sentence level.

Careful and expeditious reading

- **Careful reading** involves extracting complete meanings from text, whether at the global or local level. This is based on slow, careful, linear, incremental reading for comprehension.
- **Expeditious reading**, in contrast, involves quick, selective and efficient reading to access relevant information in a text.

Levels of reading activity

- Reading can be divided into four levels including
 - i) careful local within sentences
 - ii) careful global across sentences (the mental model)
 - iii) text (the text model)
 - iv) multiple texts (the documents model).

Decisions taken about the purpose for reading determine the relative importance of these levels (mental model, text, documents) when carrying out a reading activity, especially if the response is to be in the form of an extended writing task.

Types of expeditious reading

- Three types of expeditious reading are distinguished in the Khalifa and Weir (2009) framework: **scanning**, **skimming** and **search reading**.
- These reflect the real life reading processes in academic settings generally; readers find themselves having to read and learn from a whole text as well as integrate information from various texts especially for the preparation of assignments.

Types of expeditious reading

- **Scanning** : a form of expeditious reading that occurs at the local level – reading selectively to find specific words, figures or phrases in a text.
- **Skimming** : generally defined (Urquhart and Weir 1998, Weir 2005) as reading quickly by sampling text to abstract the gist, general impression and/or superordinate idea: skimming relates exclusively to global reading.
- **Search reading** : involves predetermined topics. The reader does not necessarily have to establish a macro-propositional structure for the whole of the text, but is simply seeking information that matches his/her requirements. However, unlike scanning (where exact word matches are sought) the search is not for exact word matches, but for words in the same semantic field as the target information.

Thus....

- The different types of reading that readers might choose to carry out, the different levels of processing that might be activated as a result and the knowledge base necessary to successfully complete a reading-into-writing task provide us with the theoretical framework on which to base our test instruments.

Cognitive processing levels in writing

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| – Macro-planning | - <i>ideas, genre, readership, goals</i> |
| – Organisation | - <i>ordering/ relationship between ideas, goals</i> |
| – Micro-planning | - <i>paragraph level organisation</i> |
| – Translation | - <i>propositional content converted into linguistic</i> |
| – Monitoring | - <i>checking mechanical accuracy</i> |
| – Revising | - <i>correcting/adjusting, revising and editing</i> |

Investigative methodologies

- Questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Verbal protocol analysis
- Eye-tracking studies
- Keystroke logging studies

**ADDRESSING CONTEXTUAL VALIDITY
FACTORS IN READING-INTO-WRITING
TASKS**

Contextual parameters

- **Setting: task**
 - Response format
 - Purpose
 - Knowledge of criteria
 - Weighting
 - Text length
 - Time constraints
 - Writer-reader relationship
- **Linguistic demands: (task input and output)**
 - Lexical resources
 - Structural resources
 - Discourse mode
 - Functional resources
 - Nature of information
 - Content knowledge
- **Setting: administration**
 - Physical conditions
 - Uniformity of administration
 - Security

Examining Reading
(Khalifa & Weir 2009)

Examining Writing
(Shaw & Weir 2007)

Contextual parameters

- **Setting: task**
 - Response format
 - Purpose
 - Knowledge of criteria
 - Weighting
 - Text length
 - Time constraints
 - Writer-reader relationship

*The task **instructions** (or rubric) can be used to embody and communicate most of these contextual parameters for a reading-into-writing task.*

Skilful task design can help prompt the relevant cognitive processes of interest for reading-into-writing.

Task setting through instructions (i)

Your lecturer has asked you to write a short essay - drawing upon all the information (verbal and non-verbal) contained in the two articles below.

Key points for your essay

1. Give your essay **a title which summarizes the content** of the two articles.
2. **Describe the problem and its causes** as identified in the articles.
3. **Summarize the different solutions** that are suggested in the articles.
4. State in a conclusion which of these you think is **the most effective solution** and **give your reasons**.

Task setting through instructions (ii)

Marking criteria

You must use your own words. You will **fail** if you copy chunks from the articles (more than 5 continuous words in a sentence).

Your essay will be scored on

- 1 Content
Are all the **4 key points** listed above covered in your essay?
- 2 Organization
Is the **overall structure** of your essay clear and logical?
- 3 Language
Have you used a wide range of appropriate **grammar** and **vocabulary**?

Task setting through instructions (iii)

Instructions on timing

You will have **25 minutes** to read the articles and then plan your essay.

You will then have **40 minutes** to write your essay. You should write between **180 and 200 words**.

You will have another **10 minutes** to review and revise your essay. During this time, check that you have fulfilled all the key points stated in task instructions 1-4 above.

Contextual parameters

- **Linguistic demands: (task input, i.e. reading text/s)**

- Lexical resources
- Structural resources
- Discourse mode
- Functional resources
- Nature of information
- Content knowledge

*Automated analysis of the **reading input text(s)** can provide useful measures of various contextual parameters: e.g. Lexical frequency/ density/diversity/ AWL content; syntactic/ discourse complexity; functional content.*

***Tools:** Word functions, e.g. sentence length, readability; Compleat Lexical Tutor; TextInspector; CohMetrix*

Your lecturer has asked you to write a short essay - drawing upon all the information (verbal and non-verbal) contained in the two articles below.

Key points for your essay

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Are all the **4 key points** listed above covered in your essay?
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Is the **overall structure** of your essay clear and logical?
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Have you used a wide range of appropriate **grammar** and **vocabulary**?

Instructions on timing

You will have **25 minutes** to read the articles and then plan your essay.

You will then have **40 minutes** to write your essay. You should write between **180 and 200 words**.

You will have another **10 minutes** to review and revise your essay. During this time, check that you have fulfilled all the key points stated in task instructions 1-4 above.

The importance of task instructions

- see discussion in Shaw and Weir (2007:65-66)
- some general principles:
 - simple enough to understand
 - short enough so as not to take up too much test administration time
 - sufficiently detailed for test takers to know exactly what is expected of them
 (Bachman and Palmer 1996:121)

Contextual parameters

- **Linguistic demands: (task output, i.e. written response)**

- Lexical resources
- Structural resources
- Discourse mode
- Functional resources
- Nature of information
- Content knowledge

*Automated analysis of the **test taker's written response** can also provide useful measures of various features: e.g. lexical frequency/diversity/density/A WL content; syntactic/discourse complexity; functional content.*

***Tools:** Word functions, e.g. sentence length, readability ; Compleat Lexical Tutor; TextInspector; Cohmetrix*

**ADDRESSING SCORING VALIDITY
FACTORS IN READING-INTO-WRITING
TASKS**

Scoring validity factors

- Assessment criteria
- Rating scale(s)
- Score reporting and interpretation
- Rater training / standardisation

Guideline on revisions

You have **10 minutes** to read the instructions again and **revise** your essay accordingly to make sure that all requirements have been fulfilled. You may also wish to revise your essay in terms of

- 1 Content
Are all the **4 key points** listed above covered in your essay?
- 2 Organization
Is the **overall structure** of your essay clear and logical?
- 3 Language
Have you used a wide range of appropriate **grammar** and **vocabulary**?

Remember, you must use your own words. You will **fail** if you copy chunks from the articles (**more than 5 continuous words in a sentence**).

Your score is likely to improve if you spend time revising your essay.

Assessment criteria and rating scales

An analytical assessment approach using several criteria (as opposed to an impressionistic/holistic approach) permits a more fine-grained evaluation of reading-into-writing performance. This has the potential for providing some meaningful diagnostic information to help inform decisions about the nature and extent of any systematic remedial intervention given to students post entry.

Proposed analytical assessment criteria

Plagiarism (copying chunks of more than 5 consecutive words) will result in overall failure.

1. **Relevance and adequacy of content** (coverage of key points)
2. **(Compositional) Organisation** (cohesion and coherence)
3. **Language** (choice and control of lexis, grammar)

Relevance and adequacy of content

- the extent to which the writer has responded appropriately to the task and the specific instructions given about the relationship between the input reading material and the written output
- covers the inclusion of 4 essential key points, as well as communicative effect on the reader (i.e. awareness of writer-reader relationship and appropriate level of formality)

Relevance and adequacy of content

3	<p>Relevant and fully adequate response to the task.</p> <p>All 4 key points required in the task included and expanded appropriately.</p> <p>Achieves desired communicative effect on target reader.</p>
2	<p>Partially successful response to the task.</p> <p>One or two key points inadequately covered or omitted, and/or some irrelevant material included.</p> <p>May fail to communicate clearly to target reader and/or achieve the desired effect.</p>
1	<p>Limited response to the task.</p> <p>More than 2 key points omitted and/or considerable irrelevance/repetition, possibly due to misinterpretation of the task.</p> <p>Fails to achieve the desired effect because considerable effort will be required of the reader.</p>

(Compositional) Organisation

- the way in which the written production has been structured and organised in terms of the overall format, the grouping and sequencing of ideas in paragraphs, and the coherence of the argumentation throughout
- covers notions of cohesion and coherence, across both sentences and paragraphs

(Compositional) Organisation

3	Overall shape and internal pattern clear. Information and ideas organised logically and coherently. Satisfactory use of cohesion resulting in effective communication. Format appropriate to the purpose of the task and audience.
2	Evidence of some underlying structure but not adequately controlled. Information and ideas partially organised but sometimes incoherent. Communication not always effective due to inadequate cohesive control. Format may be inappropriate to the purpose of the task and audience.
1	Little evidence of overall shape or underlying structure. Information and ideas presented largely incoherently. Linking devices rarely used and erratic use of punctuation Attempt at appropriate format unsuccessful or inconsistent.

Language

- the clarity of linguistic expression in English, including the selection and control of grammar and vocabulary items (syntactic accuracy, lexical precision, use of topic/discourse markers)
- includes stylistic choices relating to academic register

Language

3	<p>Wide range of structure and lexis with a variety of linking devices. Errors minimal but do not impede and may be due to ambitious attempts at more complex language. Register appropriate to purpose of the task and audience. Few punctuation and spelling errors.</p>
2	<p>Adequate range of structure and lexis though with little complex syntax and/or lexical precision. Errors can distract the reader and may obscure communication at times. Register sometimes inappropriate. Some errors in punctuation and spelling.</p>
1	<p>Unexpectedly narrow range of structure and vocabulary - tends to be simplistic or repetitive. Frequent and/or basic errors in lexis and grammar obscure communication. Little or no awareness of appropriate register. Poor control of punctuation and spelling.</p>

Why the coloured shading?

- Scales adopt a 'traffic light' approach, i.e.
 - Green (3) signifies an *adequate* performance, e.g. by a student who should not need additional EL/study skills support post entry
 - Orange (2) signifies a *below adequate* performance, e.g. by student who will benefit from some targeted EL/study skills intervention post entry;
 - Red (1) signifies a *significantly weak* performance, e.g. by a student who will be a high-priority candidate for substantial EL/study skills intervention post entry.

Score reporting

Scores could be reported :

- *overall* - for quick decision-making purposes (by summing the 3 subscores from the analytical criteria to produce a 'grade' of A, B or C)
- and also *at subscore level* - to provide a profile of performance quality for diagnostic purposes and follow-up remedial intervention.

The grade boundaries may need to be determined (according to need and available resources). One scenario might be as follows:

8-9	=	Grade A
6/7	=	Grade B
5 or <	=	Grade C

Score interpretation

A = a quality of performance which meets or exceeds minimum requirements expected for students, and which therefore suggests that no additional systematic remedial intervention will be needed post entry

B = a quality of performance which falls below minimum requirements expected for students, and which therefore suggests that some additional systematic remedial intervention will be needed post entry

C = a quality of performance which falls significantly below minimum requirements expected for students, and which therefore suggests that a substantial level of systematic remedial intervention will be needed post entry

U = unclassified performance the text is too short, completely off topic, illegible or plagiarised (No further marking is needed).

Outcomes

- This 3-category approach should help to filter out in a well-reasoned and systematic way those students who do not really need extra help, and also identify 2 groups for follow-up training - a high-need group and a lower-need group
- Appropriate support for needy students + rational and effective allocation of available resources

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Thank you for your attention!

Questions/Comments?